CLAIM AMENDMENTS:

1. (Currently amended) A method, comprising:
determining whether a hard drive is locked;
if the hard drive is locked, requesting a password from a basic input-output system (BIOS) during a boot sequence of a device, after loading an operating system kernel;
receiving the password from the BIOS;
checking the password for validity; and
if the password is valid, unlocking a the hard drive with the password.

2. (Original) The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:
executing an initialization component in the operating system kernel; and
loading a plurality of drivers.

3. (Canceled) Please cancel Claim 3 without prejudice.

4. (Original) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the operating system kernel is loaded from a flash memory.

5. (Original) The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:
freezing a lock mechanism to prevent tampering with security parameters.

6. (Previously presented) The method as recited in claim 2, wherein the plurality of drivers include integrated device electronics (IDE) drivers.

7. (Currently amended) A system, comprising:
a processor;
a hard drive coupled to the processor;
an operating system to execute on the processor;
a basic input-output system (BIOS) to execute on the processor;

a password stored in the basic input-output system (BIOS) to unlock the hard drive; and

a driver to execute from the operating system on the processor and to call the basic input-output system (BIOS) to retrieve the password during a boot sequence of the system, after a kernel of the operating system is loaded, the driver further capable of determining the validity of the password and if the password is valid, the driver further capable of unlocking the hard drive with the password.

8. (Original) The system as recited in claim 7, further comprising:

a chassis intrusion mechanism to alternate between a secure mode and a maintenance mode;

wherein the hard drive remains password protected in both the secure mode and the maintenance mode.

9. (Original) The system as recited in claim 7, wherein the password is a serial number.

10. (Original) The system as recited in claim 7, wherein the password is encrypted.

11. (Previously presented) A machine-accessible medium having associated content capable of directing the machine to perform a method during a boot sequence of the machine, the method comprising:

receiving, by a basic input-output system (BIOS), a hard drive password request from an operating system after a kernel of the operating system is loaded during the boot sequence;

determining, by the basic input-output system (BIOS), if a system is in a maintenance mode;

retrieving, by the basic input-output system (BIOS), a password, when the system is not in a maintenance mode;

encrypting, by the basic input-output system (BIOS), the password; and

passing, by the basic input-output system (BIOS), the encrypted password to the operating system.

12. (Original) The machine-accessible medium as recited in claim 11, further comprising:

requesting, by an integrated device electronics (IDE) driver, the password;

receiving, by the integrated device electronics (IDE) driver, the encrypted password;

wherein the integrated device electronics (IDE) driver is part of the operating system.

13. (Original) The machine-accessible medium as recited in claim 11, wherein the password is a system serial number.

14. (Previously presented) A method, comprising:

determining, by an operating system, that a hard drive is locked, the operating system having a kernel loaded during a boot sequence;

receiving, by the operating system, a password from a basic input-output system (BIOS), the password received after the kernel of the operating system is loaded;

determining, by the operating system, the validity of the password; and

if the password is valid, unlocking, by the operating system, the hard drive using the password.

15. (Canceled) Please cancel Claim 15.

16. (Original) The method as recited in claim 14, further comprising:

freezing, by the operating system, a lock mechanism for the hard drive.

17. (Currently amended) A method, comprising:
executing a basic input-output system (BIOS);
loading an operating system kernel;
executing the operating system kernel;
loading at least one integrated device electronics (IDE) driver;
querying a hard drive to determine if the hard drive is locked;
if the hard drive is locked, querying the basic input-output system (BIOS) for a password after the operating system kernel is loaded and executed;
returning the password from the basic input-output system (BIOS) to the at least one integrated device electronics (IDE) driver;
determining if the password is valid; and
if the password is valid, unlocking the hard drive.

18. (Original) The method as recited in claim 17, further comprising:
accessing the basic input-output system (BIOS) from the operating system kernel through a system interrupt.

19. (Original) The method as recited in claim 18, further comprising:
initializing the hard drive, after unlocking the hard drive.

20. (Previously presented) The method as recited in claim 18, wherein loading an operating system kernel further comprises the computer system loads the operating system kernel in less than three seconds.